**UK Nephrops: Crew Welfare a Priority**

The UK *Nephrops* fleet will be launching an independent social risk assessment (SRA) to continue the progression towards improved welfare standards for all crew members.

With some of the recent welfare concerns in mind, and the imminent dissolution of the UK *Nephrops* FIP, industry representatives made the decision in February this year to apply for the In-Transition to MSC (ITM) programme, with the intention of further progressing the extensive work going on under the Project UK FIP. Discussions and organisation around this new initiative has been ongoing since February.

As there is no major social welfare element to the ITM programme, the catching sector and other industry partners have agreed to incorporate an SRA as part of the ongoing work. Under Project UK, due to being a FIP listed under Fishery Progress, the *Nephrops* fleet was required to initiate a full SRA as part of its work programme. The ITM and the rapid succession of applying the fishery through this different platform has given industry the ability to focus on the welfare elements earlier than expected.

Considering these requirements, the fishing industry is delivering the positive actions toward change. The steering group covers a large section of the UK fishing fleet, and so the work to be undertaken to meet the social requirements requires significant resources of both time and money.

Mike Park, CEO of SWFPA said, “*it is important that the fishing industry continues to improve on the management and harvesting of Nephrops and to implement appropriate worker driven social responsibility policies. Those are the actions of a responsible and proactive industry*”.

This process will no longer include any involvement with US-based Fishery Progress, through their Human Rights and Social Responsibility (HRSR) policy but will involve the development of third party approved SRAs, which are more appropriate for this fishery.

It must be noted, there is a myriad of work ongoing within the UK *Nephrops* fleet and indeed the wider catching sector regarding the social welfare, wellbeing, and safety of crew.

Projects underway are focused on delivering improvements across a range of areas including the Change on the Water project, partially funded through the Seafood Ethics Action Alliance, and are also developing several apps for crew to use, with the ability to anonymously record grievances with third party auditors both in Scotland and Northern Ireland. This is part of our worker driven social responsibility initiative, which is in collaboration with the [Fair Food Programme](https://fairfoodprogram.org/) (FFP), the [International Transport Workers Federation](https://www.itfglobal.org/en) (ITF), and the [Focus on Labour Exploitation](https://labourexploitation.org/about-us/) (FLEX).

“*Nothing is more important than the social welfare and safety of our crew members. Industry have worked with groups such as Human Rights at Sea (HRAS) and have fervently lobbied UK government for a sensible alternative to the transit visa system for years. The new social risk assessments will ensure our fleet maintain the highest welfare standards,”* says Adam Holland of the Northern Ireland Fishermen’s Federation.

Like all sectors of the UK fishing fleet, those catching *Nephrops* take crew welfare and wellbeing very seriously and remain fully committed to ensuring both the best standards possible for all our crew.

**UK catching sector**, including the Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation, the Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation, the Scottish White Fish Producers Association and other industry representatives.